

Youth & Student Protest - Students
for a Democratic Society -
History

S. L. I. D.
ORGANIZERS
MANUAL

WHY JOIN SLID

There is a school of historians that sees American social thought as having developed in a basically cyclical way. The reforms of the progressive era were followed by the repression of the Palmer days. The "normal" twenties looked around the corner and found the radicalism of the thirties. The fifties, it is therefore argued, mark a logical swing of the pendulum. We are in a period of reaction to the New and Fair deals; this is the era of "New Conservatism". The collectivists have used up their panaceas, it is argued, and an agonizing reappraisal is long overdue.

What is the liberal-minded student to do in such an age? Throw out his copies of Veblen and Dewey and replace them with Russell Kirk's last volume? Should he take up a position of defence of the status quo? Or should he vie with the radical reactionaries to see who can attack the moderates the most vehemently?

SLID, the Student League for Industrial Democracy, does not claim that it has answered all the questions which must face the thoughtful student or that it can offer THE program for our times. But in its 50 years of existence, it has gotten some idea of how to find the most effective role during changing climates of opinion, discovering the questions appropriate to each era and applying to each new problem the criteria of a basic ethical outlook.

Since its inception in 1905 as the Intercollegiate Socialist Society, an American parallel to the British Fabian Society, the SLID and its parent organization the League for Industrial Democracy, have sought non-dogmatic solutions which develop an approach relevant to the American versions of the problems which have always faced humanity.

The forms of social evil which led Upton Sinclair and Jack London to form the LID have changed, but there is still the need for the indignation and condemnation of greed and exploitation which motivated them. The open conflict which surrounded Walter Reuther when he formed a SLID Chapter at Wayne is no longer as much in evidence, but the difference between actions taken for private profit and those charmed in the public interest can still be noticed.

The essence of SLID's approach has been this continuity of ethics which has been at the base of the search for new solutions. SLID believes that there need not be the dichotomy between moral teachings and actual practice which has characterized all too many of the actions in today's America. SLID believes that radical changes can be brought about by gradual reforms, that idealism can be a practical force in forming the institutions of the future.

Faced with the possibility of unimagined plenty, we live in a world in which two-thirds of the people are ill fed. In the midst of our wealth can be found millions living on sub-standard conditions. Where democratic planning and co-operation might assure maximum production in the public interest we still see a profit oriented economy which all too often pays but lip service to the value inherent in each individual. And where transfer of power from private to public hands requires new safeguards for the right of the individual, we have seen a too frequent subversion of constitutional guarantees of individual freedom.

These are but a few of the contradictions which continue to face us in this era of "peace and prosperity". The new potential which is every day more evident in new uses of atomic power, automation, etc. give new impetus to the necessity of a continued search for practical answers. SLID seeks to bridge the gap which has too often existed between idealistic moralizing and practical planning. As in the past, SLID wishes to use every weapon in the arsenal of democracy to allow each and every individual to develop his maximum potential. It seeks to build a democracy which, in the words of John Dewey, the LID's late President, is "a living reality in every aspect and reach of our common life" for we can see in economic and social democracy the best safeguard of the political rights of the individual.

The philosopher Whitehead once stated that the standard of a nation is the level of its dreams. It is this dreaming which is the first step in the building of a dynamic program for democracy. And it is to this experiment that SLID continues to be dedicated.

GETTING STARTED

Organization is a talent few people know they have until they try it out. Actually there is not that much difference between an informal group that meets for an occasional bull session and that mysterious thing called a "society" or "club."

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY A GROUP?

It might be helpful to put this problem into a theoretical framework. A group comes into being when any collection of individuals share one or more common experiences together. This is the basis, for instance, of an alumni group. Or it might be a group of people looking for answers, who want to look together.

In the case of a SLID group, people might come together for a variety of reasons, including personal beliefs, desire to put ideas into action, desire for intellectual and social companionship, and even curiosity, where the person prefers a loose association. SLID has a place for all these interests.

A TAILORED APPROACH

From the beginning it would be advisable to establish a reasonable level of expectation. The "public" which a SLID group be trying to reach is probably restricted to around an estimated 3 to 7% of the student body* which have acquired an interest in political, social and economic questions and who are initially receptive to the kind of activities which we will be engaged in.

The principal means of contact, and the best according to advertising experts, is the personal approach. The kinds of approaches on this level which have proved most effective are:

1. Philosophical approach (This emphasizes heritage of John Dewey and the need to apply the democratic method to the economic and social sphere as well as the political one. Ours is a non-dogmatic inquiry which has as its only bias the preference for movement over stagnation. Join us in this search for insight.)
2. Educational approach (We endeavor to stimulate our own generation to consider the problems which we will shortly be confronted with. In order to reach others we hold forums, issue pamphlets, organize broad conferences and radio debates. We do not support candidates for public office, believing that there are other organizations in existence which were specifically organized to do this work.)

*Williamson, Layton and Snoke: A Study of Participation in College Activities. (Minnesota Studies in Student Personnel Work)

Democratic radical approach (There are many students on every campus who, while believing in democracy, feel that they possess some of the answers to our domestic difficulties in a mixed economy with an increased measure of public ownership. SLID believes in encouraging fundamental re-examination of our social institutions with a view to reform and welcomes such points of view.)

4. Instrumental approach (If a person agrees with 60% of the SLID program and wants to work for these principles, SLID is flexible enough to provide channel for effective expression.)

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Most big organizations were started by a handful of enthusiasts, often as few as five or six. The important thing is to decide to get started, and then proceed as if you know exactly what to do.

1. Obtain names of contacts and basic materials:
 - a) write to National Office for:
 - (1) names of contacts
 - (2) application forms and literature
 - (3) charter application
 - (4) model constitution
 - b) run an ad in the student paper
 - c) ask friendly groups for contacts
 - d) ask for names of friends of your members and sympathetic faculty and community leaders who might have suggestions
2. Have an interview with the director of student activities to find out what requirements there are for recognition. Specifically how to:
 - a) secure rooms
 - b) secure publicity
 - c) bring in outside speakers, etc.
3. A preliminary meeting should be called to agree on type of organization, name, the preparation of a constitution, and the election of at least temporary officers. There are three possibilities with respect to relationship to the National SLID:
 - a) Directly chartered SLID Chapter. All members of the chapter must be members of the SLID.
 - b) An Affiliated Society. Here the chapter may have its own name and statement of purpose, provided that these are not inconsistent with the national constitution. All chapter members must be members of the National SLID.
 - c) Cooperating Groups which may contain individual members-at-large of SLID. It is understood that such groups are free to cease cooperation at any time in any project.
4. After you adopt your constitution, elect officers, receive your SLID charter and school recognition, you are all set. Now your task is to make the best use of this opportunity by putting your imagination to work on how best to serve the need of the intellectually alert student.
5. Keep in touch with your National Office and send in reports on your activities.

SOME SAMPLE PROGRAMS

Having seen the general framework, you may wonder what chapters have been doing in their actual programming. The examples given below are from recent chapter programs; the suggestions may be of use for your own chapter.

YALE The Yale SLID affiliate has specialized in the presentation of panel discussions on underlying questions in our social scene. Its panels have usually consisted of faculty specialists and outside experts, often from the LID. The chapter has purposely aimed at a very high level and has discussed such questions as "Anti-Intellectualism in America," "Is the Current Religious Revival a 'New Failure of Nerve'?", "Will the Underdeveloped Areas Choose Democracy?", and "Is There a Monopoly in the Mass Media?" The chapter has chosen men who could best represent important viewpoints and could participate in an open discussion. Thus it has rejected more flamboyant extremists who would use the platform for demagoguery, but has heard totalitarians of left and right who were able to give careful presentations of their views. In addition to this, the chapter has had smaller discussion groups for members featuring guest speakers from the faculty on such topics as: "Is there an objective moral standard?", "The impact of Max Weber's thought" or "Reason vs. faith in current philosophy." Speakers have included many Yale faculty members and such outside speakers as Norman Thomas, Mark Starr, Hannah Arendt, Dwight MacDonald, et al.

WISCONSIN The Wisconsin chapter, while presenting many public meetings, has undertaken a more varied program. This has included a meeting on the year-old Kohler strike (speakers from both sides were invited and considerable publicity was given the meeting.) When the American Legion began to attack the college and the newspaper, the chapter began its own investigation of the American Legion, asking the Legion to define its view of the American way of life. Among other activities has been a series co-sponsored with the Slavic studies department on the current scene in the Soviet Union, and a debate with the communist Labor Youth League.

MINNESOTA Starting from undergraduate discussion groups the Minnesota chapter has initiated a special research project on discrimination on campus and adjacent facilities. This kind of research can be of interest to the local community as well as to students throughout the country. Research and polls were also used by the NYU chapter, which polled over a thousand students, finding out their opinions on civil liberties, political slogans, etc. Chapters may find polls on basic attitudes of interest and the work done professionally in Stoffer's Fund for the Republic study on Communism, Conformity and Civil Liberties may serve as a model. Students should, however, be warned that polls should be done with the help of experts and members should get some professional help from the faculty.

NEW YORK In addition to its forums and discussions, taken advantage of radio facilities in the area and broadcast panel discussions and individual talks on questions ranging from the "New Conservatism" to "Subsidization of the Arts." Members may prepare their own program or join in a panel or debate with members of other groups.

WAYNE students prepared a series of University Papers based on the famous Federalist Papers. These handsome leaflets were based on faculty and student thought on basic problems of democracy and were a vital link between the ivory tower theorizing and actual problems of present political life.

CHICAGO members participated in campus elections and were able to aid in the sponsorship of a special scholarship for students in exile from the Soviet tyrannies in Eastern Europe. Action in student government by other chapters has also resulted in the questioning and abolition of discrimination in dormitories, against excessive charges put on student groups, etc.

Other chapters have set up special exhibits, worked in cooperation with local trade union, cooperative and civic groups. Such action has ranged from a special film showing of the Oppenheimer interview which attracted one thousand people to aiding workers on picket lines. The choice is vast and it is up to you--The experiences of other chapters form a backlog of information on which you can draw.

NATIONAL SERVICES

SLID is an organization which functions on many levels. In addition to chapter activities, SLID has an extensive operation on the national level, and also internationally. In order to participate effectively in these activities, we ask you to write frequently and to send in clippings and reports of your meetings so that we will know who attended, how the speakers were, what special projects you are undertaking. Here are some of the services and activities available through your National Office.

HELP IN ORGANIZING

SLID can help you in nearly every aspect of the chapter activities. To begin with, it can help you in organizing, give you names of faculty members and friends of the LID, and of what students on campus have written in of their interest. The National Office will be glad to advise you on problems which may arise.

GETTING SPEAKERS

SLID can help you find speakers. It can recommend LID members and friends in your particular area, it can tell you of noted speakers who will be touring near your college, it can schedule noted trade union leaders, educators, foreign officials, et al., who may be interested in speaking tours. For many years the LID speakers' bureaus sent people to every corner of the nation. That experience has built up for SLID an important foundation which can be of help to you today.

LITERATURE

SLID and LID publications can help you recruit new members and inform your own members and the community at large. Sold at your meetings, they can help increase your revenue. Placed on sale in local book stores and newsstands, they can call attention to your existence on campus. Distributed at meetings of your own or other groups, they can form the basis for informed discussion of topics which you may have in mind. SLID has a large list of publications for sale as well as a considerable number for free distribution. This includes not only SLID and LID publications, but brochures and magazines published by other democratic groups, here and abroad.

LID ACTIVITIES

SLID members also receive announcements of LID activities to which they are invited. This includes the annual conference of the LID, radio programs and city forums.

VOICES AND INSTITUTES

SLID organizes several regional conferences such as the New "Conference on Conformity and Dissent" and the Boston conference "Planning in a Free Society." Your chapter can help in the planning of these conferences with other chapters in your area and with the national office. The complexity of such planning may necessitate direct help in the form of a visit from a national staff person--but much can be done from the local level. Likewise, there are national conferences, such as the Summer Training Institute held each year, or educational tours such as the one to Saskatchewan held recently. All of these activities depend on suggestions and participation from all SLID members, in chapters throughout the country.

CONVENTION

The annual SLID convention elects new officials, plans the next year's program, voices SLID opinion on current social issues, and indicates new areas of concern demanding exploration and research. The chapter should try to send as many people as possible to the convention. Those who cannot attend are asked to send in suggested resolutions in advance of the convention. Draft resolutions are then sent to all members before the conventions in order that the chapters shall have an opportunity to discuss the resolutions.

NEWSLETTER AND TRACTS

SLID's various publications; its newsletter, THE SLID VOICE, its magazine, THE MONITOR, and its research papers SLID RESEARCH TRACTS, all depend on the interest of SLID's members. All are encouraged to write articles of a general or theoretical nature for the Monitor. Chairmen should send reports on campus activities to the Voice, and any member with suggestions on current activities or questions should likewise send them to the Voice. Any student who has written a long research paper which he feels would fit into the Research Tracts is encouraged to send it in to the Tract Editorial Board. The Board would also gladly give suggestions to anyone who would like to write a tract, but has no clear area in mind.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

SLID has at various times undertaken special national projects which may be carried out with special local emphasis. SLID has currently helped in the formation of a special student committee on human rights in Latin America, in the past it has organized national publicity on violations of human rights in East Germany and Florida. Projects of this nature as well as special research and education programs can also be initiated in cooperation with the national office.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

As has been shown above, SLID has an extensive program of interorganizational and international affairs. SLID is affiliated to the Young Adult Council, which in turn is affiliated with the World Assembly of Youth. SLID is also an associate, non-voting member of the International Union of Socialist Youth, an organization of European and Asian labor oriented youth groups. Our representative to IUSY also appears before the UN on matters pertaining to youth and student problems. In addition, we maintain contact with kindred groups in Canada through the North American Bureau of IUSY.

EVALUATION

As with all other things, leadership improves with experience. Here are some helpful ideas which have proved themselves. This can also be a useful checklist to measure your effectiveness as a chapter.

Titles are not too important, except for fixing responsibility when that is necessary. However, there are certain jobs that are common to all organizations. Let us consider the three most important people: the Chairman, the Publicity Director, and the Secretary-Treasurer.

I. THE CHAIRMAN

The Chairman's importance in an organization such as the SLID is best demonstrated by the list of responsibilities which a good chairman assumes. Do not be discouraged if initially you are not able to live up to it.

1. He must call meetings together if the chapter doesn't meet regularly, or if the previous meeting had not set a date for reconvening.
2. He must check with the Publicity Director to make sure that a room is provided to meet in.
3. He must prepare agenda which the membership must approve.
4. He must check to see that the committees have been functioning and have something to report.
5. He must chair the meetings:
 - a) He must open the meeting on time, and not permit it to run overtime.
 - b) He must keep the discussion on the agreed order of business.
 - c) He must clarify and coordinate discussions, and he must give everyone a chance to speak.
 - d) He must see that the speakers who are invited are taken care of when they arrive and when they leave, and he must introduce each one properly.
6. He must always think about new activities for the chapter. In effect he should consider himself an honorary member of the Program Committee.
7. He must be constantly on the lookout for potential leaders who can fill vacancies caused by graduation or transfer of members to other schools.

II. THE VICE-CHAIRMAN AND PUBLICITY DIRECTOR

In addition to assisting the Chairman, experience has shown that the important functions of publicizing the organization ought to reside with the Vice-Chairman. This is a flexible kind of job which can be as important as the holder of it wants to make it. Briefly, its principal elements are:

1. Obtaining a room for all meetings.
2. Representing the organization before other student bodies.
3. Preparing leaflets and posters. It is helpful if this person knows how to letter on a stencil and can get access to a mimeograph machine when needed.
4. Place notices of meetings in the school newspaper and follow up stories.

If the Publicity Director succeeds in performing all of these functions he will have the knowledge that his was a crucial job worthy of the fullest recognition.

III. THE SECRETARY-TREASURER

as he or she is very often called, is another very important individual in the chapter. He is the "mail line" of communication between the membership and the officers. He may also be the public face of the organization who writes to potential speakers. This may be the outsider's first contact with SLID. Also, the way he writes the letters or cards which announce the meetings, very often materially affects the attendance at these meetings.

All secretaries keep files, which may become quite valuable some day as a reminder of "the things we did." Records also save time. Here are suggested folders for your chapter folio:

1. A roster of all the members
 2. Minutes of Meetings (Exec. Com., Gen. Membership, and Com. meeting)
 3. Correspondence received
 4. Copies of correspondence transmitted
 5. Financial records
 6. Copies of all throwaways put out by the chapter
 7. A scrap book of pictures and clippings about the chapter
- A small investment in either a loose leaf book with separators, or a cardboard portfolio with manila file folders would be well worth the money spent on it.

YOUR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE The above officers, plus any additions you may make, will constitute your Executive Committee. Your aim ought to be to set your chapter up as a going institution. People respect a group that is "businesslike" in its methods. One way to perpetuate this illusion is to print your own stationery. It is most important that your chapter officers attempt to arrange to meet together informally in the cafeteria at least once a week. This way you keep in touch and have an opportunity to act quickly when new issues come up.

The Art of Leadership. Below are some simple, concise
es which have been found to make for more effective leadership.

1. Consult others often.
2. Know your members well.
A good idea is to keep a separate address book of the members, their addresses, phone numbers, and any special talents that they may possess. To keep in touch, it is wise to make social visits to the homes of members. Being interested in your members as persons in their own right will result in greater respect for you and SLID.
3. Learn the facts first! If you have to take sides in a controversial discussion, make sure you know what you are talking about.
4. Always seek to combine the best features of rival plans.
5. Meet all new people who visit the chapter. Explain what SLID is and what it does with enthusiasm.
6. Remember that there is nothing more frustrating to an organization than to agree to do a lot of things, and then to do none of them really well. Make sure that the thing that is asked of the chapter is something that the chapter can do.
7. Try to involve new people by dividing up the work.
 - a) People should be encouraged to think of organizational responsibilities as a real opportunity for growth. Make sure that when assignments are accepted that they are clear and on a par with people's abilities and available time. Involvement should be gradual for new people, else they become overwhelmed.
 - b) Follow through on each assignment.
 - c) Compliment people for doing a good job. Offer to help when it seems to be too much.
8. Try always to work from a long range plan
 - a) Taking Stock of Your Chapter
 - (1) Relations between members; morale?
 - (2) Utilizing all of chapter abilities and resources?
 - (3) High attendance at business meetings; active membership?
 - (4) Growing chapter membership?
 - (5) Good relations with college community?
 - (6) Good relations with other SLID Chapters? National Office?
 - b) What Members Expect from Chapters
 - (1) Chance to do something politically constructive
 - (2) Chance to learn more about significant world problems
 - (3) Chance to meet new friends
 - (4) Chance to talk over own ideas on different problems
 - (5) Chance to receive current literature
 - (6) Identification with other members past and present

POLICY

QUALIFICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP

Article III, Section 1 of the SLID Constitution states that:

"Membership in the SLID is confined to young people who believe in education for economic, political and cultural democracy; who believe in the democratic way of life as a means and as a social goal. By virtue of the democratic aims of the League, advocates of dictatorship and totalitarianism and of any political system that fails to provide for freedom of speech, of press, of religion, of assembly and of political, economic and cultural organization; or any system that would deny civil rights to any person because of race, color, creed, or national origin, are not eligible for membership. Nor are those eligible whose political policies are wholly or largely determined by the policies laid down by the leaders of a foreign government."

"No person can be a member of a SLID chapter who is not a member of the National SLID."

COORDINATION

"The policy of chapters may not conflict with that formulated at the Conventions or by the N.E.C." This provision refers to public pronouncements and actions. "Chapters are required to report any stand they may take within two weeks." Decisions of the N.E.C. may be appealed to Convention. "Two or more chapters may request a national referendum on any question."

STRUCTURE

Conventions are held annually with members in chapters entitled to cast number of votes equal to membership in chapter. Members at large may vote as individuals. Convention elects:

National Executive Committee which consists of:

1. National President
2. Vice President for Education
3. Vice President for International Affairs
4. Members at large equal to 1 % of total membership, with minimum of six and maximum of fifteen. At present it is six members.
5. Three alternates

Relationship with LID:

1. SLID has four representatives selected by N.E.C. to LID Board, one of whom is National President
2. LID Board has Student Committee which makes recommendations regarding student department
3. LID Board delegates authority regarding student affairs to Student N.E.C. but reserves right of veto since LID is one legal entity. Veto has never been exercised.

Following the victory of the Allies over the Axis powers in 1945, there was great enthusiasm for the strengthening of world unity, either through the United Nations or through a world government. Various groups were formed on the campus which capitalized on this sentiment. Chief among these were the Student World Federalists and the Collegiate Council for the United Nations. The latter was more of a federation of international relations clubs. The former underwent a split in 1952 and a separate group called WORLD (World Order Realized through Law and Democracy) was organized and existed for several years.

Since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, Zionism has gained many adherents. The growth in the Zionist movement was reflected in the increased enrollment in Zionist youth organizations. On the campus, student members of these groups were urged to join the Intercollegiate Zionist Federation of America, which in 1953 became the Student Zionist Organization. Its members have an ideological orientation which is basically nationalistic and democratic. It includes all shades of political opinion from the left wing Nashomer Hatzair to the right wing revisionist BETAR.

TOTALITARIAN CONFUSION ON THE LEFT

In 1917, when Lenin overthrew the democratic Kerensky government in Russia, a large group of Marxist dissidents split off from the American Socialist Party and eventually organized as the American Communist Party. In 1926 and in 1928 certain opposing factors in the CP were expelled and some of these congealed into the Socialist Workers Party, a Trotskyite group which preyed on socialist and liberal organizations. During the 1930's, the purged American Communist Party gained many successes through a "United Front" policy.

With the coming of World War II, the Young Communist League, the CP's youth arm, changed its name to the American Youth for Democracy and proceeded to recruit many "innocents" to "fight against fascism." After the war, and following a transition, the CP took advantage of the sentiment for a third party and led in the establishment of the Progressive Party. Its youth group, known as the Young Progressives of America grew rapidly on the campus until it became the largest student political group. With the decline of the PP, YPA also lost ground. In 1949 the AYD, which had been maintained as a parallel organization, was liquidated and the Labor Youth League was set up as a "non-party Marxist study group."

The LYL is still the principal Communist led youth organization. The new post-Geneva "line" may produce new groups with emphasis on "understanding the Soviet Union" and "we socialists should work together."

The Trotskyists in the Socialist Workers Party split in two wings led by Max Shachtman and James Cannon respectively. The question of supporting the Soviet Union. The right wing Shachtmanites, known as the Independent Socialist League, moved further right with one element affirming its Trotskyite past and another element moving toward a Bevanite position. In 1954 the youth group of Shachtmanites merged with a splinter of the Young People's Socialist League, the youth organization of the Socialist Party, to form a marxist youth group known as the Young Socialist League. Its principal slogan is "Against Both War Camps." The official organ of this group is the YSL Challenge, which is published as a page of LABOR ACTION, the ISL (Shachtmanite) organ.

STIRRINGS ON THE RIGHT

Modeling itself on the Intercollegiate Socialist Society, an organization with headquarters at Irvington-on-the-Hudson and calling itself the Intercollegiate Society of Individualists was set up in 1952. Claiming members in over 400 campuses in 45 states, the ISI is led by Frank Chodorov, an editor of the Freeman, and William F. Buckley, Jr. It has received financial support from the Foundation for Economic Education, an extreme right wing propaganda group. Some of its members have been asked to collect information re political activities of fellow students. At present it collects no dues nor holds any conventions, but this should not minimize its effectiveness since most of its groups are informal and off campus.